



# CPE REPORT

Eastern Kentucky University News for the Council on Postsecondary Education



## EKU CONTINUES ADDRESSING TEACHER SHORTAGE WITH OPTION 9 COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION COURSES FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATION CERTIFICATION

With the state's on-going teacher shortage, Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) offers innovative approaches to place educators in classrooms across the state. The Kentucky Department of Education's School Report Card notes a nearly 25% teacher turnover rate for the 2022-23 school year. To help address the shortage, EKU became the first public university in the state to announce an Option 9 alternative route to teacher certification and simultaneously offered a new online elementary education degree last fall. Building on Option 9, EKU will be offering competency-based education (CBE) courses to further eliminate barriers to teacher certification for current certified staff in schools.

Option 9, created by the Kentucky General Assembly, allows for completion of a bachelor's degree and initial teacher certification in a three-year period for those working in a non-teaching position in a qualified school district. EKU Option 9 students complete coursework online and work with students in classrooms to complete field experience and student teaching requirements. Local districts and schools help ensure student success

by providing necessary mentoring and support throughout the program.

EKU's addition of CBE courses in the spring will allow Option 9 students to earn credit based on demonstration of competency in specific skills and knowledge, rather than on time spent in class.

"This unique program will provide paraeducators across Kentucky with the opportunity to apply their knowledge from careers in education toward becoming a certified teacher," said Dr. Elizabeth Smith, Dean of the College of Education and Applied Human Sciences. "We are thrilled to support home-grown teacher pipelines for our school partners by giving paraeducators with years of experience in schools a more efficient and accessible route to becoming teachers."

With the addition of innovative pathways to teacher certification, EKU's education programs continue to experience record enrollment. Nearly 550 students are currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education—a 20% increase from last year.



## EKU AMONG BEST COLLEGES FOR ANOTHER CONSECUTIVE YEAR

Eastern Kentucky University was named in the 2025 U.S. News and World Report's Best Colleges list for another consecutive year. EKU ranked in the following categories: National Universities, Top Public Schools, Top Performers on Social Mobility and Nursing.

EKU moved up from last year's ranking in the National Universities and Top Public Schools lists. For the second year in a row, EKU came in first among Kentucky's public universities for Top Performers on Social Mobility.

EKU was also recognized among the Best Colleges in the U.S. in the WSJ College Pulse Ranking 2025, presented by The Wall Street Journal, College Pulse and Statista.

In addition to the College Rankings, EKU landed on the WSJ College Pulse rankings of Student Experience, Best Salaries, Social Mobility and Best Value. EKU was in the top 50% of the Best Value ranking, and came in at No. 154 out of 500 on the Social Mobility list, first among Kentucky's public universities.

EKU President David McFaddin said, "EKU's outstanding performance in the Social Mobility category highlights our commitment to providing excellent educational opportunities to our students, many of whom are the first in their families—as I was—to earn a college degree. Ensuring an affordable and accessible education, as well as good career opportunities upon graduation, are paramount in our mission as a School of Opportunity."

## EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY AND ALLEGiant AIR ANNOUNCE ACCELERATE PILOT PATHWAY PROGRAM PARTNERSHIP

Eastern Kentucky University has officially joined Allegiant Air's Accelerate Pilot Pathway Program, offering EKU students an exclusive fast-track to the airline industry. EKU's Aviation program, known for its impressive 100% job placement rate and innovative program, now stands alongside other prestigious institutions in the Accelerate Pilot Pathway program, including Purdue University, Kent State University and the University of North Dakota. This partnership provides EKU students with unmatched opportunities to launch their airline career.

Upon entering their senior year, students may be hired on as a cadet and provided a conditional job offer as an Allegiant first officer. Cadets will enjoy Allegiant employee benefits such as pass travel on Allegiant flights, participation in visits to Allegiant's headquarters in Las Vegas, and access to Allegiant's training centers. Once a cadet reaches their required hours of flight training, Allegiant will sponsor their attendance in an Airline Transport Pilot Certification course, and upon completion, will join Allegiant as a first officer.

Following a press conference, Allegiant provided a presentation and meet-and-greet with EKU Aviation students, then toured the Central Kentucky Regional Airport (CKRA). The airport, home to EKU's Aviation program, was awarded \$3.5 million in federal funding in April to construct a general aviation terminal. EKU will be matching \$1 million of the funding awarded, bringing the total funding to \$4.5 million. CKRA is the third busiest general aviation airport in the state.

EKU was among the nation's first FAA-approved 1,000-hour Restricted ATP institutions to help meet the demand for pilots amid a national pilot shortage.

